

LISTING OF THE CLAIMS

1. (Currently Amended) A system for monitoring guests in a network community, comprising:

an account database maintaining a plurality of resident accounts for a plurality of resident users of the network community ~~and at least one guest account of at least one guest of a respective resident user, wherein a user of the at least one guest account maintains administrative control over the at least one guest account, a resident account being allocated a limit on a number of guest slots that are available to be filled with guests having guest accounts sponsored by a resident user of the resident account, the resident user of the resident account being enabled to offer guest invitations to accept and establish a guest account sponsored by the resident user, the number of guest invitations enabled to be offered being greater than the number of guest slots available to be filled;~~ and

~~an account server accessing the at least one guest account to determine a status of the at least one guest account and updating a respective resident account with the status of the at least one guest account, wherein:~~

~~the respective resident account contains guest account information for the at least one guest sponsored by the respective resident user, the guest account information being added to the respective resident account upon creation of the at least one guest account; and~~

~~the account server updates the status of the at least one guest account sponsored by the respective resident user in the respective resident account updating availability of the guest slots associated with the respective resident account upon acceptance of a guest invitation by a guest making the acceptance and relaying the availability status to the resident user.~~

2. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the resident account sponsoring the guest account includes guest account information that includes a date upon which a guest invitation was sent to a respective guest and an end-date upon which the at least one guest account is scheduled to end.

3. (Original) The system of claim 2, wherein the guest account information in the respective resident account is updated to include a modification made to the end-date.

4. (Original) The system of claim 2, wherein the guest invitation is an email message.

5. (Original) The system of claim 2, wherein the guest invitation is an instant message.

6. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein the a status of the ~~at least one~~ established guest account is updated in the respective resident account after the status of the ~~at least one~~ guest account has changed.

7. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein:
a provider of the network community offers a network service to members of the network community, the members comprising resident users and ~~guest users~~ guests.

8. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1, wherein:
the network community comprises an instant messaging community; and
a contact list of the respective resident user is updated with contact information of a user after a guest invitation is sent from the respective resident user to the user, wherein:

the contact information of the user is further updated if the user accepts the guest invitation;

the contact information of the user is removed from the contact list if the user declines the guest invitation;

the contact list of the respective resident user is made available to the ~~at least one~~ guest user.

9. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 1, further comprising:

a presence server maintaining presence information of members of the network community, wherein the presence server determines the presence information of the ~~at least one~~ guest user from the status of the ~~at least one~~ guest account of the ~~at least one~~ guest user, wherein the presence information includes a particular presence state that indicates that the ~~at least one~~ guest account has not been activated.

10. (Currently Amended) A system for monitoring guest users of a network community, comprising:

means for storing a plurality of resident accounts for a plurality of resident users of the network community ~~and at least one guest account of at least one guest of a respective resident user, wherein a user of the at least one guest account maintains administrative control over the at least one guest account, a resident account being allocated a limit on a number of guest slots that are available to be filled with guest users having guest accounts sponsored by a resident user of the resident account, the resident user of the resident account being enabled to offer guest invitations to accept and establish a guest account sponsored by the resident user, the number of guest invitations enabled to be offered being greater than the number of guest slots available to be filled;~~

~~means for accessing the at least one guest account to determine a status of the at least one guest account;~~

means for updating a respective resident account with the status of the ~~at least one~~ guest account sponsored by the resident user of the resident account;

~~means for generating the at least one guest account; and~~

means for adding account information concerning the ~~at least one~~ guest account to the respective resident account upon the generation of the ~~at least one~~ guest account, wherein the account information includes a date upon which a guest invitation was sent to a respective guest user and an end-date upon which the ~~at least one~~ guest account is scheduled to end; and

means for updating availability of the guest slots associated with the respective resident account upon acceptance of a guest invitation by a guest user making the acceptance and relaying the availability status to the resident user.

11. (Original) The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for sending a guest invitation to a user from the respective resident user;
and

means for updating a contact list of the respective resident user with contact information of the user after the guest invitation is sent from the respective resident user to the user.

12. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for maintaining presence information of members of the network community, wherein the presence information of the ~~at least one~~ guest user is determined from the status of the ~~at least one~~ guest account of the ~~at least one~~ guest user, wherein the presence information of the ~~at least one~~ guest user is accessible by the respective resident user sponsoring the ~~at least one~~ guest user.

13. (Currently Amended) The system of claim 10, further comprising:

means for notifying the ~~at least one~~ guest user of a current status of the ~~at least one~~ guest account of the ~~at least one~~ guest user; and

means for notifying the respective resident user of the current status of the ~~at least one~~ guest account of the ~~at least one~~ guest user sponsored by the respective resident user.

14. (Currently Amended) A method for monitoring guest users of a network community, comprising:

maintaining a plurality of resident accounts for a plurality of resident users of the network community and ~~at least one guest account of at least one guest of a respective resident user, wherein a user of the at least one guest account maintains administrative control over the at least one guest account,~~ a resident account being allocated a limit on a number of guest slots that are available to be filled with guest users having guest accounts sponsored by a resident user of the resident account, the resident user of the resident account being enabled to offer guest invitations to accept and establish a guest account sponsored by the resident user, the number of guest invitations enabled to be offered being greater than the number of guest slots available to be filled;

~~accessing the at least one guest account to determine a status of the at least one guest account; and~~

updating a respective resident account with the status of the ~~at least one guest account~~ sponsored by the resident user of the resident account; and

updating availability of the guest slots associated with the respective resident account upon acceptance of a guest invitation by a guest user making the acceptance and relaying the availability status to the resident user.

15. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, further comprising:

~~creating the at least one guest account;~~

adding guest information regarding the ~~at least one guest account~~ to the respective resident account upon the creation of the ~~at least one guest account~~, wherein the guest information includes identifying information of the ~~at least one guest account~~, wherein the guest information further includes an end-date upon which the ~~at least one guest account~~ is scheduled to end;

updating the guest information to incorporate a modification made to the end-date, wherein the modification is initiated by one of a group comprising the ~~at least one guest user~~ associated with the ~~at least one guest account~~ and the respective resident user sponsoring the ~~at least one guest account~~.

16. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, further comprising:

updating the status of the ~~at least one~~ guest account in the respective resident account if a user has accepted a guest invitation from the respective resident user of the respective resident account; and

updating the status of the ~~at least one~~ guest account in the respective resident account if the user has declined the guest invitation from the respective resident user.

17. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, further comprising:

defining different representations for the status of the ~~at least one~~ guest account;

updating the status of the ~~at least one~~ guest account to a first representation if a user has accepted the guest invitation from the respective resident user and the respective resident user does not have a vacant guest slot available for the user; and

updating the status information of the ~~at least one~~ guest account to a second representation if the user has accepted a guest invitation from the respective resident user and the user has successfully completed a procedure for setting-up the ~~at least one~~ guest account of the user.

18. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising:

providing a network service to members of the network community, the members comprising resident users and guest users.

19. (Previously Presented) The method of claim 14, further comprising:

sending a guest invitation to a user from the respective resident user;

updating a contact list of the respective resident user with contact information of the user after the guest invitation is sent from the respective resident user to the user;

updating the contact information of the user with additional information provided by the user if the user accepts the guest invitation; and

removing the contact information of the user from the contact list if the user declines the guest invitation.

20. (Currently Amended) The method of claim 14, further comprising:
maintaining presence information on members of the network community,
wherein members comprise resident users and guest users of the resident users;
determining presence information of the ~~at least one~~ guest user based upon the
status information in the guest account of the ~~at least one~~ guest user; and
enabling the respective resident user sponsoring the ~~at least one~~ guest user to
access the presence information of the ~~at least one~~ guest user.